

February 23, 2011

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Dear Committee Members,

My name is Bethy A. Guiles-Smith. I am a private citizen of Connecticut for the past 44 years. In the name of full disclosure, I am an employee of the Workers Compensation Commission, Rehabilitative Services Unit. My presence today is not for the representation of the Chairman of the Commission or on behalf of the Workers Compensation Commission (WCC).

**Specific Concerns**

I am in opposition of the most current proposed budget to "eliminate the Rehabilitation Services" program.

For the sake of a clear understanding, **Sec. 31-275. Definitions.** (4) "Compensation" means benefits or payments mandated by the provisions of this chapter. . .

**Sec. 31-280(b)(8).** The chairman of the Workers' Compensation Commission shall: "Establish policy for all matters over which the commission has jurisdiction, including **rehabilitation services**", education, statistical support and administrative appeals; . . . . .

**Section 31-328a. Rehabilitation Services Program for employees suffering compensable injuries.** (a) The Workers' Compensation Commission shall provide rehabilitation programs for employees suffering compensable injuries within the provisions of this chapter, which injuries disabled them from performing their customary or most recent work. The chairman shall establish rehabilitation programs which shall make the programs available in convenient locations throughout the state.

Under the provisions of **Section 31-345** of the Connecticut General Statutes, employers are assessed annually by the State Treasurer for the amount necessary to cover the commission's administrative expenses. Therefore, the "proposed budget to:

- Eliminate Funding for the Rehabilitation Services Program and
- Reduce Information Technology Consultant Services

will not increase the General Fund as noted in **Section 31-345**. The funding for the commission is not assessed via "Taxpayers monies". Thus, these funds are "off the budget". Therefore, I am asking that the assessed funds from the Employers and Insurance Company's assessed by the State Treasurer be restored to the budget of the Workers' Compensation Commission to allow the Commission to adequately continue its legislative, mandated benefit for the Workers' Rehabilitations Services program, including the Information Technology Consultant Services.

The WCC is solely funded by employers and insurance companies, not by the citizens tax dollars. Any reductions to the agency budget will not increase the General Fund in any way. Therefore, to reduce, or not adequately fund, the Workers' Compensation budget will afford no tax relief to the business community or individual tax payers (Leighton, 2008).

Elimination of the “Workers’ Rehabilitation Services” is an injustice, deprivation of a statutorily mandated service and will adversely impact the statutorily mandated benefit to all injured workers as follows:

- Deprivation of job retraining for injured workers (Division of Workers’ Rehabilitation). Job Training is statutorily mandated, and it must be provided to qualified injured workers.
- Deprivation Vocational Counseling
- Deprivation of Aptitude/Interest Testing
- Deprivation of Training / Education
- Deprivation of Job Seeking Skills
- Deprivation of Placement Assistance

Thank you for your willingness to re-evaluate the Connecticut General Statutes as it pertains to the mandate for the Workers Rehabilitation Services Division.

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